

Date: Saturday, March 12th, 2011

Attn: Sen. Harp
Rep. Walker
Members of Human Svc Subcommittee

I am writing in regards to the division of BESB. I am concerned about the impact that this will have on my child who is visually impaired as well as on other children with visual impairments. Erik who is now 14 has benefitted greatly from BESB. He has been with them since he was an infant and without them it would have been extremely difficult for me to navigate through support systems in the state. He was diagnosed with ocular albinism at the age of 14 months and he has received numerous beneficial services including low vision equipment, early intervention services and large print books. Erik also was granted financial assistance each year to attend a camp for the visually impaired. This experience changed both our lives. He was able to connect and identify with other children similar to himself. I witnessed amazing social and emotional growth in my child, who always was challenged by this in the regular classroom. Thanks to the support and opportunities from BESB, Erik has become a self-actualized, confident and self-assured person interpersonally and with his peers. I would be disappointed and heartbroken if the division of BESB was to go forward. I would hope that the state of Connecticut would like to be seen as a supporter of individuals with disabilities and not sacrifice the needs of those who would benefit BESB's services.

From Erik Larson

I am 14 years old and I have ocular albinism. Although I can see better than some other visually impaired kids, I still have a hard time with reading some print, too much detail and sometimes my eyes get really tired when I have to do work. I am worried about BESB being divided up because they have done a lot for me, including making sure I have large print books and other devices to help me read better. I have really loved going to Camp Inter-Actions and it has helped me by accepting my disability because at that camp, I'm not the only one. I would be worried that a lot of programs would get lost or seem less important to other kids with visual disabilities. Thank you for listening.

Sincerely,

Katharine and Erik Larson
Griswold, CT